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## 6.0 MAGNETIC TAPE

A State or railroad with computer facilities may elect to provide updates on reel-to-reel magnetic tape if they develop a computer program to format these updates in the FRA prescribed format. This format is presented and explained in Appendix C of this document. Before starting, the State or railroad should contact the FRA to make the necessary arrangements. A State or railroad which is preparing its own tape and submitting updates to the FRA in the prescribed format should also provide a printout of the updated records to the other party, either State or railroad.

The following is a list of guidelines for submission of updates to the National Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Inventory on reel-to-reel magnetic tape:

- a. Submit the updates on a nine-track tape. Densities of 1600 BPI and 3200 BPI are recommended although a 6250 BPI tape may also be submitted. The data format may be ASCII or EBCDIC, and the tapes may be labelled or unlabelled.
- b. Enclose a cover letter describing the tape's characteristics, including the number of 80-character records it contains and the number of crossings to be updated. If possible, include a printed dump of the first block of data on the tape.
- c. Use as much of each 80-character record as possible. The format of DATA ELEMENT NUMBER, COMMA, DATA, SLASH allows several data fields to be strung together within the same record. If it is necessary to use multiple lines for a crossing, duplicate the identification data (columns 1 through 25) into the next line and continue with the data beginning in column 26.
- d. There can be only one update per grade crossing per submission. As many fields as possible may be changed within a given update for a crossing but the system only allows for a crossing to be updated once in a given run. For example, two updates for the same crossing: one dated 1/1/95 and the other dated 1/1/96, should not be submitted simultaneously even if they are updating different fields. The Effective Date is part of the identification data.
- e. Contact AMB Associates, Inc. at (301) 587-9439, extension 222 regarding any questions related to this process, or FRA if the telephone number is no longer in operation.

The field specifications for each data element within the inventory record are contained in Appendix C. The tables in Appendix C describe the length of each field as well as the valid range of values for the data. Sample update records are also provided in Appendix C.

